

## NEWS RELEASE

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# Youth Opportunity Center Celebrates Its Grand Opening

The newly renovated Youth Opportunity Center (YOC) opened its doors last week with a grand opening that featured youth, businesses, community leaders and Pacific Gateway Workforce Investment Network partners.

"The renovated YOC is an exciting example of the Network's renewed efforts to connect with our community's young men and women in more meaningful and relevant ways. We believe youth need to get educated, get experienced and get employed. We believe it makes a difference," said Bryan Rogers, Executive Director of the Pacific Gateway Workforce Investment Network.

Located at 3447 Atlantic Ave., in Long Beach, the new 3,200-square-foot YOC was designed with the input and participation of local youth. As a result, the new space reflects a more engaging, interactive and inviting environment that responds to the needs of today's young job-seekers.

"Providing economic opportunities for our young people continues to be a personal passion of mine," said Long Beach Mayor Bob Foster. "More than 94,000 youth between the ages of 15 – 24 live in the Youth Opportunity Center's service area. They need to be engaged and this Center is a focal point of that engagement."

The success of the YOC is thanks to the hundreds of employers who have participated in the YOC internship and employment programs. Speaking at the opening were: Penelope Cornwall, Chief Operating Officer, DCA Civil Engineering Group in Torrance; Maegan Rivas, Executive Assistant, XRT Express Reefer Transport Inc, in Wilmington; John Silvius, Boy Scouts of America, Long Beach Area Council, in Long Beach; and Ron Jones, Manager, Long Beach Clothing.

"We were especially glad that Mr. Jones could be with us for the YOC opening. When Long Beach Clothing first opened at The Pike in Long Beach, the YOC assisted with its recruitment efforts. Mr. Jones was part of that process and was hired as a sales associate. He's now the manager of Long Beach Clothing and the company has been hosting YOC interns since 2006," said Rick Gonzalez, Manager of the Youth Opportunity Center.

Operated by the Workforce Investment Network, the YOC and its partners serve the communities of Long Beach, Signal Hill, Lomita and Torrance, and help job seekers, ages 14 to 24, find volunteer opportunities, internships and employment, at no cost, through résumé writing assistance, career readiness workshops, mentoring, community resources and other services. Last year, more than 5,000 youth benefited from YOC services.

There are an array of enhancements at the new YOC, including a youth-driven interior design, a Now Hiring job board with up-to-the-minute job postings, and high-impact graphic installations as well as career spotlights that introduce youth to a myriad of career opportunities in high-demand industries such as goods movement, healthcare, utilities and energy.



Youth who have changed their lives through their participation in the YOC's internship and employment programs also spoke at the event. Those youth included:

**Le'Onita Edmonson, Summer 2008 Inspired Internship Program**

A junior at Cabrillo High School, Le'Onita is currently enrolled in our Summer 2008 Inspired Internship Program and is working at the Youth Opportunity Center.

**Cristina Varela, Spring 2008 Inspired Internship Program**

Cristina interned with the City of Long Beach's Housing Authority. She recently graduated from Cal State University Dominguez Hills with a Bachelor of Science in Public Administration and in January will begin her Master of Public Administration graduate studies at CSUDH. Cristina is now working, through AppleOne, full time at the Youth Opportunity Center.

**Viet Trinh, Spring 2007 Inspired Internship**

Viet interned with the Employment Development Department of the State of California and is now an employee with the agency. He recently graduated from Long Beach Poly High School and will be attending the University of California at Riverside, with a major in Chemical Engineering, in the fall.

**Thaddeus "TJ" Wimes, Spring 2007 Business Career Inspired Internship Program**

T.J. recently graduated from Long Beach Poly High School and will be attending Long Beach City College in the fall. During his internship he enrolled in a course through Long Beach Unified School District and received 10 elective credits towards his high school graduation. T.J. put in 50 hours of classroom time and then interned at Long Beach Clothing. T.J. so impressed the staff at LB Clothing that before he finished the internship they offered him a part time job. T.J. worked as a sales associate and managed LB Clothing's Myspace web page. He is currently working for 6th District Councilmember Dee Andrews.

**Youth Opportunity Center (YOC)**

The YOC provides an array of resources and tools to help youth in Long Beach, Torrance, Lomita and Signal Hill find education, experience and employment. Through the YOC, youth have invaluable access to job-search tools, online resume posting, resume development, work readiness training, computers, Internet and email access, career coaching and exploration, internships, apprenticeships and volunteer opportunities, as well as assistance with diploma completion and preparation for entry into college. For more information, visit [www.HireAYouth.com](http://www.HireAYouth.com).

**Pacific Gateway Workforce Investment Network**

The Pacific Gateway Workforce Investment Network serves businesses and job-seekers in the communities of Long Beach, Signal Hill, Torrance, Lomita, San Pedro, Wilmington, Harbor City and Harbor Gateway, with access to an array of resources, tools, services and information designed to build a competitive workforce that supports our region's economic growth. For more information, visit [www.PacificGatewayWorkforce.com](http://www.PacificGatewayWorkforce.com).

The Pacific Gateway Workforce Investment Network offers free services to both businesses and job seekers.

For more information about services call: 562.570.WORK, Toll Free 800.292.7200, TTY 562.570.4629 or visit [www.pacificgatewayworkforce.com](http://www.pacificgatewayworkforce.com)